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ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN

Implementation of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women to the Year 2000

Report of the Secretary-General

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I. INTRODUCTION

1. Since the endorsement of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women 1/ for the period up to the year 2000 by the General Assembly in its resolution 40/108 of 13 December 1985, the Secretary-General has annually presented a report to the Assembly on the implementation of the Strategies. In its resolution 46/98 of 16 December 1991, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to report to the Assembly at its forty-sixth session on measures taken to implement the provisions of the resolution. This should include an assessment of recent developments relevant to the priority themes to be considered by the Commission on the Status of Women at its next session, with a view to obtaining the views of Governments so that these can be transmitted to the Commission for inclusion in its consideration of the themes.

2. The present report has been prepared with contributions from and in consultation with the organizations of the United Nations system.

II. PRIORITY THEMES TO BE CONSIDERED BY THE COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN AT ITS THIRTY-SEVENTH SESSION

A. Equality: increased awareness by women of their rights, including legal literacy

3. The importance of increasing awareness by women of their rights was one of the essential means identified for implementing the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women. In paragraph 3 of the recommendations and conclusions arising from the first review and appraisal of the implementation of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women to the Year 2000 (Economic and Social Council resolution 1990/15 of 24 May 1990, annex), it was noted that

> "The interdependence of the different political and social sectors on the one hand, and the legal and social situation on the other, needs to be recognized. However, de jure equality constitutes only the first step towards de facto equality. Most countries have enacted legal measures to ensure that women have equal opportunities before the law, that is de jure equality. But de facto as well as de jure discrimination continues and visible political and economic commitment by Governments and non-governmental organizations will be required to eliminate it. One obstacle to eliminating de facto discrimination is that most women and men are not aware of women's legal rights or do not fully understand the legal and administrative systems through which they must be implemented. Some affirmative action measures require legal bases which still need to be created."

On the basis of that diagnosis, recommendation I states that:

> "Governments, in association with women's organizations and other non-governmental organizations, should take steps on a priority basis to inform women and men of women's rights under international conventions and national law and to prepare and/or continue campaigns for women's 'legal literacy' using formal and non-formal education at all levels, the mass media and other means; efforts to this end should have been undertaken by 1994."

4. The 115 countries that have become States parties to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (General Assembly resolution 34/180 of 8 December 1979, annex) as at 31 July 1992, for example, have entered into a legal obligation to achieve equal rights for women in all spheres of life. Specific rights are also set out in such specialized conventions as the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization Convention against Discrimination in Education and various conventions of the International Labour Organisation. However, the periodic reports made to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, as well as on specialized conventions, indicate that the pace of translating these obligations into national practice is not always rapid. Discriminatory legislative provisions continue to exist in the political, economic and social spheres, in the civil, penal and commercial codes and in various administrative rules and regulations.

5. This is often manifest in the law which governs legal capacity, rights and obligations in marriage, guardianship, inheritance, income, land rights, and participation in public affairs. It can be particularly difficult when the law appears to make a distinction between a "public" as opposed to a "private" sphere as expressed in law. The private sphere (domestic life, home, and family) is considered the traditional domain of women. The public sphere (work and politics) may be accepted as the domain of men. This public/private dichotomy can be deeply ingrained in the law. Regardless of the operative legal system or cultural context, laws touching the public arena (e.g., labour law) have, typically, been modernized and brought into line with more enlightened thinking, while family and personal matters in the private sphere have, for the most part, been left untouched by the State. In Asia and Africa, for example, the phenomenon is visible in the way State law governs the public sphere and personal (or religious) and customary laws cover family matters in often rigid and regressive ways. Even in Latin America and Europe, where there are single legal systems, there has been a reluctance to make legal reforms in family-related matters.

6. Legal systems, including their enforcement mechanisms, are typically complex administrative structures. They may not be easy to use, particularly by people lacking economic means. They may be staffed by officials who are not sensitive to gender issues in interpreting or enforcing the law.

7. Finally, there is considerable evidence that the majority of women neither are aware of their legal rights nor have access to their legal entitlements. In some countries this is related to women's lower educational attainment, including illiteracy, which is a consequence of past discrimination. In other countries, it may reflect a failure by Governments to take active steps to inform women about their rights.

8. To examine means of addressing this issue, an expert group meeting to examine ways to increase women's awareness of their rights, including legal literacy, was convened at Bratislava, Czech and Slovak Federal Republic, from 18 to 22 May 1992. The conclusions and recommendations of the meeting will constitute the basis of the report to be presented to the Commission.

9. Underlying these conclusions is a notion that legal strategies should form part of the political agenda to improve women's status. These strategies can target either the content of the law, its structure (the courts, enforcement and administrative agencies of the State), or culture (the shared social attitudes and behaviours sustaining the law). Where the content of laws is discriminatory or unjust, the remedy must be to change or abolish them and to create new laws and policies. Where the structures of the system are the major problem in achieving access to justice, the strategy must challenge and change institutions through activities such as formal legal representation, counsel and advocacy in various forms. Finally, since inadequate, gender-biased and unjust legislative formulations, law enforcement and adjudication mechanisms reflect underlying social values, changes at those levels require confronting the cultural ground upon which the system rests. In practice, no changes can be effected at the substantive or structural levels without strategic educational inputs.

10. In order for women to become active agents in effecting these remedies, they must acquire certain critical and analytical capacities as well as skills geared towards political action. Understanding the causes and mechanisms underlying women's inferior status and then taking action for change can be said to be the goal of legal literacy.

11. In this sense, legal literacy must be seen as wider than the passive acquisition of knowledge about rights and legal structures. It should be seen as an educational process that develops the knowledge and skills women need to participate politically in transforming the conditions of their lives. The kind of knowledge and skills needed cover a range, beginning with critical consciousness about gender roles and status and legal rights and lack of them, but leading to an ability to make choices about what can be changed and how to change it.

12. In this, the role of women's organizations and other interest associations is of vital importance. Through them legal literacy programmes can reach women, especially in rural and inaccessible areas, who are especially alienated and isolated and experience more pressure due to traditional attitudes.

13. Realizing that the inadequacy of information on women's rights and their means of recourse to justice has impeded the implementation of legislation which could improve the status of women, various countries have undertaken legal literacy and legal assistance programmes for women. Some countries have established mechanisms to monitor the implementation of relevant decrees by ministries and State agencies. Other countries have made efforts to ensure that laws are drafted in a way that they can be understood easily. At the grass-roots levels, other Governments, in cooperation with various women's organizations, have organized seminars and mass media campaigns to educate women of their rights. In still other countries, the legal profession has cooperated with Governments by organizing legal aid to provide free legal services to women.

14. Legal literacy is necessary for both women and men, as a part of their roles as citizens of their countries. This can be combined with campaigns emphasizing women's contribution to society in public as well as private spheres, especially in the family.

15. It has been found important to focus legal literacy education on the laws that affect women most, emphasizing the available legal remedies, and the gaining of access to those remedies. These typically include issues such as marriage, divorce, custody of children, property of rights during marriage and divorce and inheritance. It has been found important to bear in mind that where the law does not adequately protect a woman, her knowledge of the fact may facilitate a conscious decision on her part to protect her own interests.

16. The essential factor in achieving legal literacy is that it involves a change in the way women (and men) look at their situation in the context of the law. The methods that have been found most effective in achieving this change are invariably participative. They are based on face-to-face interaction, supported by outside material. The key to an effective campaign is an extensive organizational effort, which may not require many material resources.

B. Development: women in extreme poverty: integration of women's concerns in national development planning

17. As was stated in the report of the Seminar on the Integration of Women in Development, held at Vienna from 9 to 11 December 1991 (E/CN.6/1992/8, annex I), development theories, and strategies for alleviating poverty, have not included gender analysis. The development process has largely been assumed by most development theorists to be "gender-neutral". However, it has become obvious that economic development does not automatically lead to distribution of resources based upon equity, especially not to the poorest people. It is also observed that women do not benefit from development to the same extent as men. Failure to take gender into account in micro- and macroeconomic policies continues to sustain poverty and to affect women disproportionately. The poor are still more likely to be women than men whether they be young or middle-aged women left to support their families on their own, or elderly women with no means of income.

18. Development approaches differ in their perceptions of poverty. For those living in poverty, the concept is in no way an abstraction; it is a condition of daily life based on inadequate nutrition, housing, health, dignity and productive employment. However, for the purposes of analysis and policy formulation poverty can be seen as an absolute or a relative phenomenon. The choice of definition affects the way in which policies are formulated.

19. In absolute terms, poverty is a condition where a minimal standard of living, expressed in goods and services, has not been maintained. This can be seen in terms of a lack of sufficient food to meet dietary minimums, lack of shelter or essential goods. When the value of these goods is expressed in monetary values, this is often in terms of a "poverty line", an income level below which it is impossible to meet these minimum standards in a given country. In reality, it means an inability to earn a living, a loss of human potential and self-respect. It is estimated that currently over 1 billion people still lived in poverty in 1985, of whom 630 million were classified as extremely poor. 2/ It is likely that the number of persons living in absolute poverty has increased over the intervening period, as a consequence of global economic problems.

20. Poverty can also be seen in relative terms, as the gap in well-being between different strata of society. In this view, poverty is a factor of income distribution. The persons whose incomes are in the bottom 20 per cent of the distribution can be said to be relatively poor, especially in contrast to those having the highest 20 per cent. The extent of poverty can be said to be the gap between the top and bottom of the distribution. There is evidence that the gap between the highest incomes and the lowest has been increasing worldwide over the past decade, in developed and developing countries alike.

21. In theory, there is no necessary relationship between absolute and relative poverty: persons with the lowest incomes in a wealthy country could still be above the "poverty line". And people in the middle ranges of income in a poor country could be below that line. In reality, the two intersect in most countries.

22. The gender dimension of extreme poverty refers to how and why gender increases the potential for becoming poor and how poverty affects women and men in different ways. Past approaches to women in extreme poverty have been mainly focused on providing emergency solutions to women perceived as "vulnerable" and "helpless". Some have aimed at integrating poor women into the labour force as cheap labour. There is a tendency to see the issue as one of social welfare, which requires resource transfers but does not address the causes of the phenomenon. Instead, the issue of women in extreme poverty should be seen in the societal context in which poverty occurs, especially the gender factors explaining why women become poor, and are disproportionately represented among the poorest of the poor.

23. Women and men experience poverty differently and often unequally and become impoverished through processes that may diverge. Women's lives are governed by different social constraints, entitlements and responsibilities than those of men.

24. Although women's status in society may differ according to the cultural, political and social background, poverty has similar devastating consequences for a woman's life. In this respect, particular emphasis should be put on the destabilizing effects of poverty on the family structure which brings with it changes of the reproductive and productive roles of men and women. While it is sometimes argued that poverty in traditional societies is coped with through increased family solidarity, the increasing proportion of female-headed households suggested that poverty can undermine that structure and even become a condition for further poverty. A variety of strategies for coping with poverty are developed and experienced by women which differ from those used by men, deriving from the continued responsibility of women for the survival of the family and their caring role and the fact that they must perform that role in an increasingly hostile environment.

25. There is evidence of long-term social costs for families in poverty, costs that are cross-generational. The extent to which the circumstances of poverty become self-reinforcing may imply a "culture of poverty". If policies are to be developed to combat this, it is essential to identify the mechanisms through which poverty is passed on within a household to future generations.

26. Regardless of its causes, eradication of poverty requires a public response. For example, in its resolution 1992/11 of 21 February 1992, the Commission on Human Rights clearly stated that the situation of continuing deprivation is an affront to human rights, threatening progress towards sustainable development for the whole society. Eradication of poverty is the challenge for the world to achieve real freedom, democracy and equality.

27. The question of which public responses are most effective stands at the centre of the issue of incorporating gender into national planning. For this reason, it is necessary to examine the roles of different actors such as the State, the market and the community in a transformed development process for alleviating poverty, based on a gender analysis, using poverty as its focus. Each institution has a potential capacity to deal with the issue as well as limitations. All three agents are viewed as useful and necessary to combat the issue but also imperfect, if acting alone or without proper coordination. The market economy can provide employment opportunities and gives freedom of choice, but at the same time can maintain or even exacerbate existing inequalities found in the structure in which it operates. It can also create new inequalities. The State may be able to counteract and enhance equality through adopting appropriate legislation and monitoring its implementation not only owing to its regulatory (or normative) role, and it is expected to reflect, under democratization, the longer-term aspirations of the people in a society. The State has the capacity to raise taxes, allocate and reorganize resources and redefine public priorities. The State may exercise power for improving the welfare of citizens equally through the proper organization of national development planning. The capacity of the State to act is affected by debt crises, world trade and the supply of development assistance. All these factors can be analysed from a gender perspective and conclusions made about whether and how women are affected by international cooperation and assistance. The community is understood here as the first place where

households interact and therefore has a potential for some collective action, but lacks an ability to cope with forces external to it.

28. At the level of the household, there needs to be clear recognition of the diversity of structure. Low-income households, in particular, are not homogeneous in terms of family structures. There is growth of female-headed households: both de jure, in which the male partner is permanently absent owing to separation or death and the woman is legally single, divorced or widowed; and de facto, where the male partner is temporarily or permanently absent, often because of the need to migrate to find work.

29. The analysis of the market and its role in solving the problem centres on the issue of how women can be integrated into the market and the mechanisms that might allow them to realize their potential.

30. In various countries there is a distinction in the degree to which the market replaces the government or the government replaces the market. It is important to understand not only the interrelationship between market and government, but also to analyse this link from gender perspective. The task is to raise the level of understanding of these systems as a mechanism for eradicating poverty through the participation of women.

31. Moreover, current approaches to the reduction of poverty in the context of macroeconomic and sectoral policy reforms still focus mostly on the economic sphere. While economic growth might be necessary, it is certainly not sufficient for the eradication of poverty, particularly if it is not accompanied by an equitable distribution of the wealth thus created. A failure to distribute growth, it can be argued, not only leads to a failure to address essential social issues, but can undermine future prospects for growth. It is essential that development means development for people, implying the creation of opportunities in different spheres of life. It also means development by people, which requires the participatory approach.

32. Women are often systematically excluded from participating in the formulation of social priorities. It is necessary at the State level to move beyond the economic sphere and develop a broader context of reform in social policy oriented to attacking the root causes of poverty at the societal level, such as population growth, environmental degradation, lack of access to and control of population information. The capacities of poor women might be increased through the widespread provision of basic social services, especially primary education, health care and family planning.

33. Social policies to foster effective participation of women in the process of social choice, promoting human rights, and claims on resources and social security should be identified. More equitable participation of women in economic and socio-political activities also involves cultural changes so that women can have the same rights as men.

34. Consideration should also be given to the sustainability of development. Most of the world's poor live in the most ecologically vulnerable areas.

Women directly influence the environment in their performance of their daily activities and women's ability to manage resources on which their families depend is critical for everyday survival. Agenda 21, adopted by the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, acknowledges the significant role women play in environmental management and specified areas requiring urgent actions to avert ongoing environmental degradation that affects the lives of women, including drought, desertification and deforestation.

35. These issues will be considered at a seminar to be held at Vienna from 9-12 November 1992, using extrabudgetary funds provided by the Government of the Netherlands. The seminar will bring together scholars and practitioners from all regions that have had experience in the analysis of extreme poverty and in the design of policies and programmes to combat it.

C. Peace: women and the peace process

36. The importance of the participation of women in various aspects of the peace process, such as conflict resolution, international cooperation, multilateral and bilateral negotiations, disarmament efforts was stated in the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies. In recommendation XX of the recommendations and conclusions arising from the first review and appraisal of the implementation of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies in 1990 (Economic and Social Council resolution 1990/15, annex) it is stated:

> "Governments should be encouraged to increase the participation of women in the peace process at the decision-making level, including them as part of delegations to negotiate international agreements relating to peace and disarmament and establishing a target for the number of women participating in such delegations.
>
> "The United Nations and the international non-governmental organizations concerned should continue to monitor and support greater involvement of women in the peace process."

37. In fact, women are almost totally absent from the peace process at the governmental level as was shown by the report of the Secretary-General on "Equal participation in all efforts to promote international cooperation, peace and disarmament" (E/CN.6/1992/10). It is therefore necessary to address the two questions of how to involve more women in the process and what difference their increased involvement would make. Since women have never been involved in sufficient proportion (the so-called critical mass, estimated to be at least 30 per cent), the second question has to be considered to an extent in hypothetical terms. The focus is on two different, but related, issues at both ends of a continuum: women's activities related to peace at the non-governmental level; and women in the military.

38. The non-governmental activities of women have always provided a contrast to women's almost complete exclusion from the official decision-making bodies at the national and international levels. Those activities have evolved throughout history, taking various forms, changing focuses and priorities, emerging in different regions but they have always been clearly conveying women's dissatisfaction and deep concern with the state of international and national affairs related to peace. Women's activities have also directly and indirectly indicated that existing structures and mechanisms have not provided and do not provide for proper articulation of women's interests and views on global issues. Therefore women have sought and continue to seek different organizational forms to make their views known and/or work towards the achievement of certain goals.

39. The roots of the women's peace movement go back to the beginning of the nineteenth century. In the second half of that century, women's peace organizations further developed all over Europe, the first international network of women was created and women became involved in promoting the ideology of non-violence. This was also related to the women's suffrage movement, based on the premise that if women could be involved in the decision-making process through their votes, greater attention would be given to peace issues. The most visible activities, however, emerged in connection with the First World War. Many women feared and strongly opposed the outbreak of hostilities and became involved in traditional pacifist movements, leading in some cases to the creation of separate women's organizations aimed at the preservation of peace, promotion of justice and women's suffrage.

40. Women's activities for peace entered a new era after the Second World War. The suffering, devastation, and unprecedented damage to the civilian population provoked very strong anti-war and anti-nuclear movements in both Europe and Japan. The core of the women's peace movement consisted of already established organizations and was essentially eurocentric. The participation of women and women's organizations from newly independent, developing countries began to increase only in the 1960s. In the 1970s and 1980s, the peace agenda and activities of women became global and included such issues as the environment and development, the struggle against apartheid and violence in all its forms and education for peace. Women also continued in their traditional opposition to war. The women's peace movement took an active stand against conflicts as diverse as the war in Viet Nam, the Gulf war and the civil war in the former Yugoslavia. In all of these cases, women called for negotiations and dialogue as an alternative to hostilities.

41. The extension of the women's peace movement on a global basis has meant an increasing diversity in terms of forms, issues, focuses and methods of work. At the same time, a unity among women began to emerge in terms of approaches to, critical assessments of prevailing conditions and their causes and demands for significant changes in world governance. The women's movement began to be systematically influenced by female peace researchers, linking women's traditional discrimination in societies with prevailing structural violence. In this context, women began to research the issue of violence against women, a long-hidden phenomenon considered a private sphere, and

traditionally separated from any public consideration of peace-related matters. Their research pointed to links between violence in all its forms: domestic, social, and at the international level.

42. Female scholars brought to traditional peace research studies which indicated that direct violence against women increases in times of social unrest and armed conflicts. They drew attention to gender-related discrimination against women refugees and detainees. Some scholars, groups and movements also began gradually to work on alternative concepts of peace, security and holistic approaches to key global problems. They argued that there could be no lasting peace without an ethical dimension, implying justice, fairness and real democracy, and requiring the full participation of all citizens in all spheres of life, partnership and sharing. For that reason, they promoted education for peace as a way to learn respect for persons and personal relationships, and for conflict resolution, social justice, tolerance and equality, sharing the world's resources, cooperation and community. Women's concern with peace also involved consideration of ways of dealing with conflict, including mechanisms for resolving conflicts at the international level.

43. The peace process involves high-level decision-making at the national and international levels; negotiations; temporary resolution of conflicts through cease-fires and other forms of suspension of hostilities, as intermediary steps; emergency operations; and humanitarian assistance. Military forces have been and continue to be an important part of that process. Women have been far less present in military forces than men. In some countries, women have been excluded completely; in others, they have been given non-combatant or technical roles only. The issue remains controversial. The exclusion of women from the military service has been considered by some countries and women's groups as contrary to the principle of equality and existing international legal standards and that, as long as military structures exist and absorb an important part of national budgets and provide jobs and professional opportunities, all citizens should have equal access to them. Other women advocate the dissolution of military forces for both men and women rather than having women joining a military that is considered a factor in oppression. For some women, participating in military forces or operations would depend on the nature of the operation expressed in moral terms. They would be prepared to participate in the defence of their major interests, values or beliefs, but not of causes which they consider morally doubtful. For example, they would be willing to take part in police-type peace-keeping, but not in aggressive wars. Several States parties to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, reporting on women in the military service to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women under article 7 of the Convention, have reported that they had opened some or all combat positions to women.

44. There is a widespread belief that women have not been interested in participating in military service, preferring instead civilian and domestic roles. It is also argued that women are more interested in peace and conflict resolution than in armed force. However, there is evidence that, in

situations involving matters of principle, such as liberation wars, struggles against foreign occupation or when there are gross violations of human rights, women have joined military services, including resistance organizations, as volunteers. Moreover, an expanded role of military peace-keeping forces in conflict resolution at both the national and international levels can be seen.

45. For these reasons, it appears opportune to begin to examine the issue of women in the military in terms of its policy implications in the context of peace. A number of questions can be explored. One is the possible impact of women on the military in the context of the peace process. It should be noted that there are few women holding high ranks in the military in most countries and, as in the case of decision-making in other areas, it can be assumed that women exercise minimal influence on decision-making in the military. However, some studies have been done on the performance of women in the military at lower ranks; an examination of those studies could indicate some of the impact women might have on the military. Two new phenomena can be examined. The first is the presence of women in national police services. The experience of those countries where women participate in police services indicates that they play an important role with regard to the cases of violence against women, often demonstrating a different style of work and attitudes, and acting in a manner which sometimes is closer to that of social workers than traditional police. The second issue is related to women's attitudes to modern "electronic" war, which may not require any direct involvement of those in command in combat. The relation between "pushing the button" and the outcome is not immediately visible; the responsibility is shared with high-level strategic planners and scientists. For many women, the issue of electronic warfare raises some new moral and ethical questions related to the invisibility of people, the degree of damage, the alienation of decision makers and the exclusion of public opinion from observing the process.

46. There is some evidence of a link between the absence of women in the military and the stereotyping of women: it may have reinforced the notion that women were weak and needed to be "protected", and restricted their participation in society to the "private sphere" and to domestic tasks. The exclusion of women from the military was often based on this notion. The factual and legal basis for this situation has not been examined by the United Nations, and, while the issue of stereotyping generally will be considered by the Commission at its session in 1996, it seems opportune to examine the specific linkage in the context of the theme on women in the peace process.

47. The report will be based largely on a review of available literature. In view of very limited data and the fact that the issue of women in the military has not previously been addressed at the international level, that part of the report will be exploratory in nature, based on an analysis of existing national practice regarding women's access to the military service as contained in reports to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women and in scholarly literature, as well as on other related issues.

III. IMPLEMENTATION OF GENERAL ASSEMBLY RESOLUTION 46/98 ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE NAIROBI FORWARD-LOOKING STRATEGIES FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN

A. Cooperation by the organizations of the United Nations system with the Commission on the Status of Women on implementation of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies

48. In paragraph 5 of its resolution 46/98, the General Assembly urged all organizations of the United Nations to cooperate with the Commission on the Status of Women in its task of promoting the implementation of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies. In paragraph 12, the Assembly requested the relevant United Nations bodies to continue to provide action-oriented inputs when reporting to the Commission on the priority themes.

49. The sixteenth Ad Hoc Inter-Agency Meeting on Women was convened immediately prior to the thirty-sixth session of the Commission on the Status of Women. Representatives from 28 organizations and specialized agencies of the United Nations system were present, the largest number in recent years. The main work centred on preparations for the Fourth World Conference on Women. A joint statement on the preparation of the World Conference was prepared and delivered at the thirty-sixth session of the Commission on the Status of Women. The main concern identified for the Conference was the participation of women in global governance and the inclusion of their perspectives in international policies and the democratization process as well as the acceleration of their involvement in development. A consensus was achieved concerning the need to strengthen action at the national level in preparation for the Conference and to mobilize resources from all sectors to ensure the implementation of the programme of activities leading to the Conference.

50. It was also agreed to determine how women's issues might be successfully incorporated into the priorities of all agencies. A proposed information programme for the World Conference was reviewed. It was agreed that institutional support for public information campaigns should be strengthened through inter-agency cooperation.

51. The outline of the system-wide medium-term plan for the period 1996-2001, which was presented to the Commission, was also reviewed by the Inter-Agency Meeting.

B. Ageing women

52. In paragraph 20 of its resolution 46/98, the General Assembly recommended that all organizations of the United Nations should include in the policy analyses of development issues, as well as in proposals for major international conferences and in development projects, the potential contribution of ageing and elderly women.

53. The Commission on the Status of Women, at its thirty-sixth session, considered, within the theme "Development: integration of women in the process of development", the conclusions and recommendations of the Expert Group Meeting on the Integration of Ageing and Elderly Women into Development, which took place at Vienna, from 7 to 11 October 1991 (sponsored jointly by the Division for the Advancement of Women and the American Association of Retired Persons (AARP).

54. On the basis of this consideration, the Commission on the Status of Women adopted resolution 36/4 entitled "Integration of elderly women into development". The Commission, emphasizing the need to adopt an approach for the advancement of women that takes into account all stages of life and aware of the contribution of elderly women to society and development in the economic, cultural, political and social fields, requested the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women to pay particular attention to discrimination on grounds of age when evaluating national reports on the implementation of the relevant Convention. The Commission further invited the Secretary-General to undertake a study of the condition of elderly women to be incorporated in future appraisals of the implementation of the International Plan of Action on Ageing and the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies and to report to the Commission on the Status of Women at its thirty-eighth session on:

(a) The establishment, on a country-by-country basis, of profiles concerning the present and future situation of women at all stages of their lives;

(b) An evaluation of analytical methods permitting the establishment of strategies and programmes for integration of women in development;

(c) The inclusion of gender criteria in numerical targets on ageing being prepared by the Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs.

55. The Commission invited the Secretary-General to report on the implementation of these targets and programmes to the International Conference on Population and Development in 1994 and to the Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995.

C. Fourth World Conference on Women

56. In paragraphs 9, 10, 11, 14, 21 and 29 of General Assembly resolution 46/98 the Assembly addresses the various aspects regarding the World Conference on Women.

57. On the basis of its discussions, the Commission on the Status of Women, at its thirty-sixth session, adopted resolution 36/8 concerning the preparations for the Fourth World Conference on Women: Action for Equality, Development and Peace. In compliance with General Assembly resolution 46/98, paragraph 10, and decision 35/102 of the Commission on the Status of Women,

the Commission decided to accept the offer of the Government of China to act as host for the Fourth World Conference on Women. The Conference will be held in Beijing from 4 to 15 September 1995.

58. In its resolution 36/8, the Commission made recommendations about the access to and participation of non-governmental organizations in the Conference. The Commission requested the Economic and Social Council to request the Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations to consider on a priority basis, in advance of the Conference, the granting of consultative status to more non-governmental organizations concerned with the advancement of women. It also requested that the Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations be provided with additional resources to deal with the additional workload. The Commission also recommended that the arrangements for consultations with non-governmental organizations, as approved by Economic and Social Council resolution 1296 (XLIV) of 23 May 1969, should be reviewed in order to make consultative status more accessible to non-governmental organizations, particularly those from developing countries.

59. Concerning the appointment of a Secretary-General of the Conference, raised in paragraph 11 of General Assembly resolution 46/98, the Commission recommended that the Secretary-General should appoint a woman, not later than 1992, who should have international stature in relation to the advancement of women and experience of the United Nations system and who would assume primary responsibility for the preparation of the Conference.

60. The Commission decided that the agenda for the Conference should include:

(a) The second review and appraisal of the implementation of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women to the Year 2000;

(b) The Platform for Action;

(c) The main conclusions and recommendations of regional preparatory conferences;

(d) Institutional arrangements for the implementation of the Platform for Action.

61. The Platform for Action should establish concrete achievable and measurable goals to accelerate equality by the year 2000. The Secretary-General was requested to submit to the Commission on the Status of Women, at its thirty-seventh session, a report containing a first draft which would serve as a working document for the elaboration of the Platform.

62. The Secretary-General was also requested to submit to the Commission on the Status of Women, at its thirty-seventh session, a report containing information on data to be used in the second report on the implementation of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies together with an outline of the report, taking into account the recommendations and conclusions arising from the first review and appraisal of the implementation of the Strategies, contained in Economic and Social Council resolution 1990/15.

63. The Commission further requested the Secretary-General to prepare the draft rules of procedures for the consideration of the Commission at its thirty-eighth session.

64. The formal purpose of the Fourth World Conference is to review and appraise the advancement of women since 1985 in terms of the objectives of Forward-looking Strategies and to mobilize both women and men to achieve these goals. Preparatory activities are of vital importance as they should promote the Conference and accelerate the process of the advancement of women. Preparatory activities should therefore be planned at national, regional and international levels with that focus in mind. The main emphasis should be on national preparatory activity, considering it as an opportunity for attracting national attention to the issue.

65. In that respect, the Commission recommended that Governments should establish a national committee or designate a national focal point to serve as a catalyst for the preparations by initiating, organizing and coordinating national activities relating to the Conference and requested that reports on such activities be made available to the Secretary-General. Organizations of the United Nations at the national level should cooperate with national efforts and coordinate their activities through the United Nations Resident Coordinator.

66. Preparatory activities at the regional level should be designed to consolidate national experience and to identify common issues affecting countries in the region. The Commission recommended that each regional commission organize, prior to the Conference, a regional preparatory conference, and requested that the results of those conferences be submitted to the Commission on the Status of Women not later than at its thirty-ninth session. It recommended that the agenda of regional conferences include such issues as participation of women in public life and entrepreneurial activity.

67. For the Fourth World Conference, including its preparation, to succeed in attracting world attention and in creating a positive political attitude, the Commission requested the Secretary-General to plan and implement a comprehensive public information programme and to report on the campaign, including its priorities and resource needs to the Commission at its thirty-seventh session. The Commission also requested the Secretary-General to issue a new bulletin, entitled "Conference 95" twice a year in all official languages. The Secretary-General was requested also to provide Governments with a concise set of guidelines for public information campaigns at the national level.

68. Recalling the contribution of non-governmental organizations to the success of previous world conferences on women and emphasizing the importance of a parallel forum to be organized by the non-governmental organizations, the Commission invited the committee organizing the forum to provide information on preparatory activities to the Commission on the Status of Women through a report of the Secretary-General on the preparations for the Conference.

69. Recalling General Assembly resolution 46/98, paragraph 29, in which concern was expressed that the resources for the Fourth World Conference on Women were not sufficient and, Assembly resolution 46/185 of 20 December 1991, in which the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to ensure that adequate resources be provided for the preparation of the Conference during the biennium 1992-1993, the Commission on the Status of Women requested the Economic and Social Council to reconsider the budget for the Conference. A statement of programme budget implications on the costs of the Conference was presented by the Secretary-General to the Economic and Social Council at its substantive session of 1992 (E/1992/24/Add.2).

70. The matters raised in paragraph 14 of resolution 46/98 deal with the recommendation to develop further methods of compilation and data collection in the areas of concern identified by the Commission on the Status of Women to be reflected in an updated edition of The World's Women which would be prepared as a background document in all official languages for the Fourth World Conference on Women.

71. The Conference in 1995 will coincide with the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations and the Commission, in its resolution 36/8, emphasized that for the success of the conference it was important to ensure the maximum participation of Governments at the highest possible level, of intergovernmental organizations, organizations of the United Nations system and interested non-governmental organizations, as well as other regional organizations, acting through their representatives to the Commission on the Status of Women. The Secretary-General was requested to include the Conference as part of the celebrations for the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations.

72. In paragraph 21 of its resolution 46/98, the General Assembly noted the relevance of the interregional consultation to the preparation of the World Conference and requested the Commission on the Status of Women, at its thirty-sixth session, to make recommendations for the convening of the interregional consultation not later than 1993. On the basis of its discussions concerning the preparations of the fourth World Conference on Women, the Commission recommended that regional preparatory conferences include on their agenda the issue of women in public life, emphasizing their role in politics and decision-making. It also requested the Secretary-General to include information on women in public life in the preparations of the priority theme on peace: "women in international decision-making", for the thirty-ninth session of the Commission. In the preparation of that priority theme, the Secretary-General would propose to convene in 1994 an expert group or seminar with participation from all regions, which could prepare the requested information.

D. Development

73. In paragraph 7 of its resolution 46/98, the General Assembly requested the Commission to give special attention to women in developing countries and to recommend further measures for the equalization of opportunities and for

integration of these women into the development process when considering the priority theme of development. The Commission, at its thirty-sixth session, considered under the objective of development the priority theme of "Integration of women in the process of development". The attention of the Commission was drawn to the conclusions of the two meetings which were held at Vienna on the general question of women in development and the specific group of ageing women: the Expert Group Meeting on the Integration of Ageing and Elderly Women into Development (7-11 October 1991) and the Seminar on the Integration of Women in Development (9-11 December 1991). The recommendations considered essential issues such as gender analysis, the importance of mechanisms to ensure the accountability of Governments, the usefulness of setting quantified targets, the need to take into account the entire life course when planning public and other intervention and to recognize the fundamental role of women in reproductive activities of a demographic, economic and socio-cultural nature.

74. On the basis of its discussions, the Commission adopted resolution 36/5 entitled "Women and development", in which it noted that effective mobilization of women was an essential element in achieving the objectives of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies and the International Development Strategy for the Fourth United Nations Development Decade, adopted by the General Assembly in its resolution 45/199 of 21 December 1990, so the slow progress in that direction necessitated urgent action to be taken by all parties concerned. The Commission requested the Secretary-General to ensure that the issues of integration of women into development be an integral part of the Strategy.

75. The development process has largely been assumed by most development theorists, regardless of school, to be "gender-neutral". However, as it has become obvious that economic development does not automatically lead to distribution of resources based upon equity, it is observed that women do not benefit from development to the same extent as men. The failure to take gender into account in micro and macro policies continues to affect women disproportionately and to impair the success of the strategies. Gender bias should be eliminated in the global development agenda.

76. The Commission recommended, in that respect, that Governments, international donors and non-governmental organizations develop gender-oriented research in all development areas and promote specific measures in the field of training in gender-analysis programmes for development decision makers and the relevant staff involved in the policy and programme areas, in addition to the implementation process. It further requested the Secretary-General to include policy and programme recommendations on the basis of gender analysis in reporting on the implementation of the present resolution in his biennial monitoring report on the implementation of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies. In a complementary resolution (resolution 36/6), the Commission also highlighted the emerging issue of the environment from the perspective of women in development.

77. Gender perspectives should be also included in the major guidelines for economic and social policies in order to ensure that women are agents and beneficiaries of the process of development. Improved collection, compilation and dissemination of gender-sensitive and disaggregated statistics should contribute to rethinking the concept of women in development, particularly in relation to the empowerment of women.

78. In paragraph 6 of its resolution 46/98 the General Assembly requested the Commission on the Status of Women, when considering the priority theme relating to development during its thirty-sixth and subsequent sessions, to ensure its early contribution to the work of forthcoming international conferences. In that respect, the Commission on the Status of Women adopted resolution 36/2 entitled "Inclusion of the question of women in the agendas of forthcoming international meetings", in which the Commission recommends that Member States should include the question of women in the agenda for the World Conference on Human Rights, to be held in 1993, and for the International Conference on Population and Development, to be held in 1994. The Commission recommended that the same procedure should be followed for the national, regional and international preparatory meetings.

79. In its resolution 36/6 entitled "Women and the environment", the Commission requested national Governments and all governmental and non-governmental organizations to ensure the equitable participation of women in their delegations to the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development.

E. Human rights

80. In paragraph 8 of its resolution 46/98, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to guarantee the participation of the secretariats of the Commission on the Status of Women and the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women in the preparatory process for the World Conference on Human Rights as well as in the Conference itself. It should be noted that the Conference will take place at Vienna, the location of the secretariat of the Commission and the Committee.

81. The Commission on the Status of Women recommended for adoption by the Economic and Social Council the draft resolution entitled "Advancement of women and human rights". The Commission supported the recommendations of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women on the preparations for the Conference and the conclusions of the Expert Group Meeting on Violence against Women, held at Vienna in November 1991. It also requested the Division for the Advancement of Women to report to the thirty-seventh session of the Commission on the state of the preparatory process for the Conference. The Commission was requested to establish, during its thirty-seventh session, an open-ended working group to consider its contribution to the World Conference on Human Rights.

F. Disabled women

82. In paragraph 18 of its resolution 46/98, the General Assembly urged that particular attention should be given by the United Nations and Governments to the situation of women with disabilities and that Governments should take steps to ensure the equalization of opportunities for these women in the economic, social and political fields. The Assembly welcomed the creation of the Ad Hoc Open-Ended Working Group to Elaborate Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Disabled Persons.

83. The draft Standard Rules, introduced at the second session of the working group, held at Vienna from 11 to 15 May 1992, took into account the provisions of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women in order to ensure the rights of girls and women with disabilities in all spheres of life.

84. A Long-Term Strategy to Further the Implementation of the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons to the Year 2000 and Beyond: Towards a Society for All - from Awareness to Action, discussed at the United Nations Expert Group Meeting (Vancouver, 25-29 April 1992), also underlined that disabled women are facing double discrimination and should be given particular attention.

G. System-wide medium-term plan for the advancement of women for the period 1996-2001

85. In paragraph 23 of its resolution 46/98, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General, in formulating the system-wide medium-term plan for the advancement of women for the period 1996-2001 and in integrating the Forward-looking Strategies into activities mandated by the General Assembly, to pay particular attention to the strengthening of national machineries for the advancement of women and to specific sectoral themes that cut across the three objectives, equality, development and peace, and include, in particular, literacy, education, health, population, the impact of technology on environment and its effect on women and the full participation of women in decision-making.

86. A report containing proposals regarding the framework of the system-wide medium-term plan for the advancement of women for the period 1996-2001 was presented to the Economic and Social Council at its substantive session in 1992 (E/1992/6). Comments on the report were made by the Commission on the Status of Women and the Committee for Programme and Coordination. The proposals had been developed in consultations with the organizations of the United Nations system. The main difference from the 1990-1995 plan was that the 1996-2001 plan will cover all aspects of the advancement of women, including the objective of peace, that had not been covered explicitly before. Adjustments were made concerning the grouping and titles of programmes and subprogrammes. A number of issues were incorporated on a cross-sectoral basis in respective programmes and subprogrammes.

H. 1994 World Survey on the Role of Women in Development

87. In paragraph 24 of its resolution 46/98, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to continue updating the World Survey on the Role of Women in Development, 3/ bearing in mind its importance, placing particular emphasis on the situation of women in developing countries, especially the worsening of the conditions for their incorporation into the labour force, as well as the impact of reduced expenditures for social services on women's opportunities for education, health and child care. By its resolutions 44/77 of 8 December 1989, 44/171 of 19 December 1989 and 46/98, the Assembly also requested the Secretary-General to submit the preliminary version of the updated World Survey on the Role of Women in Development to the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council, through the Commission, in 1993 and a final version in 1994. By its resolution 36/8, the Commission on the Status of Women decided that the World Survey would be included among the basic documentation for the Fourth World Conference on Women.

88. The World Survey on the Role of Women in Development is a joint effort of the United Nations Secretariat and of the specialized agencies of the United Nations system. The publication provides a unique opportunity for the United Nations system to present a common, elaborated analysis of policy issues and concepts related to the advancement of women. The goal of the World Survey, and the way it is approached, have evolved as a response to economic and social changes and to new thinking on the implications of gender equality.

89. The first two editions of the World Survey made a strong case for the proposition that better knowledge of the characteristics of women's economic participation and leading to better policy design and increased participation of women would avoid an unexpected negative impact on the condition of women as well as on the society as a whole.

90. In recent years, it has been increasingly recognized that the social and cultural dimensions of women's participation, and even more, the way their role is articulated with that of men, could constitute a bias in the functioning of markets, and an obstacle to the success of development models, policies and programmes. More critical approaches have also emerged. It has been noted that gender equality is not only a way towards increased efficiency for existing development programmes, but also a goal per se. Pursuing this goal leads to questioning development goals as currently set by most societies.

91. It is proposed that the gender dimensions of development, their consequences in terms of efficiency, as well as the implications of gender equality for the development goals pursued by societies, be the keystone of the 1994 update of the World Survey. A draft of the preliminary version of the World Survey is presently under preparation in the Division for the Advancement of Women. Agencies willing to cooperate on the World Survey will be consulted on its content. Efforts have been made to include regular research work on future priority themes of the Commission on the Status of Women in the World Survey.

I. Women in the Secretariat

92. In its resolution 46/100 of 16 December 1991, the General Assembly, reaffirming resolutions 45/125 of 14 December 1990 and 45/239 C of 21 December 1990 urged the Secretary-General to increase the number of women in posts subject to geographical distribution and called for a comprehensive study of the obstacles to the advancement of women and an action programme to improve their status in the Secretariat during the period ending in 1995.

93. In paragraph 25 of its resolution 46/98, the General Assembly requested Governments, when presenting candidatures for vacancies in the Secretariat, in particular at the decision-making level, to give priority to women's candidatures, and requested the Secretary-General in reviewing these candidatures to give special consideration to female candidates from underrepresented and unrepresented developing countries and to assist those countries in identifying suitable women candidates to fill vacancies at the decision-making level.

J. Public information for the advancement of women

94. In paragraph 27 of its resolution 46/98, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to continue to provide for the existing weekly radio programmes on women in the regular budget of the United Nations, making adequate provisions for broadcasts in different languages, and to develop the focal point for issues relating to women in the Department of Public Information of the Secretariat, which, in concert with the Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs of the Secretariat, should provide a more effective public information programme relating to the advancement of women.

95. The Department of Public Information of the Secretariat continues to collaborate closely with the Division for the Advancement of Women concerning public information activities to promote the advancement of women. It is also actively involved in the inter-agency discussions concerning the implementation of the Forward-looking Strategies and preparations for the Fourth World Conference on Women, particularly as they relate to public information activities. The Department, in cooperation with the Division for the Advancement of Women, has prepared a draft public information strategy for promoting the Conference.

96. A 100-page illustrated book entitled Women: Challenges to the Year 2000, was produced by the Department of Public Information earlier this year as part of a world-wide educational campaign to increase awareness of the obstacles encountered in implementing the Forward-looking Strategies. It is produced in English, French and Spanish with an accompanying brochure and poster and has been widely distributed. A series of feature articles on various aspects of the advancement of women and women and development issues continues to be produced and distributed by the Department in English, French and Spanish. These are reprinted in the media and used in newsletters of United Nations information centres by non-governmental organizations. The Department also

continues to produce the weekly radio programme "Women" in English and twice-monthly programmes in Arabic, French and Spanish. These programmes are distributed to about 400 radio stations world wide.

97. The concerns of women are also included in information programmes being undertaken by the Department on other issues. In connection with the human rights information programme, for example, the Department has produced material on such topics as the girl child, traditional practices affecting the health of women and children, and human rights and the family. Women's issues are also an integral part of the information programmes for the 1992 World Conference on Human Rights and the 1993 International Year for the World's Indigenous People. A feature article discussing the relationship between ageing, disability and gender is being included in each press kit being produced for the special meetings of the forty-seventh session of the General Assembly on ageing and disability.

K. Resources for the programme on advancement of women

98. In paragraph 29 of its resolution 46/98, the General Assembly requested the Fifth Committee, in reviewing the programme on advancement of women contained in the proposed programme budget of the Secretary-General, to examine those proposals to ensure that established staffing levels, temporary assistance and other objects of expenditure were sufficient to ensure adequate support to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women and effective implementation of other aspects of the programme, especially the preparations for the fourth World Conference on Women, and, if proposed resources were found insufficient, to determine the appropriate resource levels.

99. In its resolution 46/185 of 20 December 1991 on the programme budget for the period 1992-1993, relating to section 21, the General Assembly stressed the importance of the preparation of the World Conference on Women and requested the Secretary-General to ensure that adequate resources were provided for such preparation during the biennium 1992-1993. It also stressed the importance of appropriate servicing of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women and requested the Secretary-General to ensure such servicing including through redeployment of resources.

100. In this connection, the General Assembly will have before it revised estimates resulting from resolutions and decisions of the Economic and Social Council at its substantive session of 1992. Those revised estimates include the estimated additional requirements for activities proposed during the biennium 1992-1993 for the fourth World Conference on Women and for the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women.

Notes

1/ Report of the World Conference to Review and Appraise the Achievements of the United Nations Decade for Women: Equality, Development and Peace, Nairobi, 15-26 July 1985 (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.85.IV.10), chap. I, sect. A.

2/ World Bank, World Development Report, 1990 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), table 2.1.

3/ United Nations publication, Sales No. E.89.IV.2.